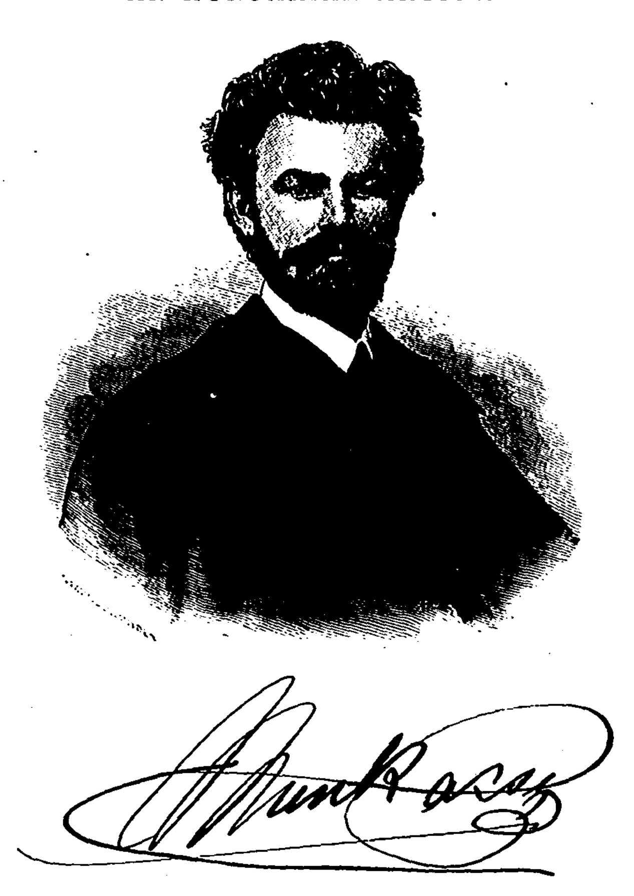
AN HUNGARIAN ARTIST.



DESCENDING the stairway of my lodgings in Düsseldorf one afternoon in the fall of 1868, I replied to a question asked in somewhat broken German by a gentlemanlike young man in regard to a painter's atelier, the advertisement of which adorned my landlady's window. A few days later I was seated before my easel, and shouted "Herein!" in response to a knock at the door, which opened to admit the same stranger, who, advancing, introduced himself as a colleague and neighbor. I rose with an apology for not having quitted my work, and received him cordially. I had heard that he had taken the vacant studio, and felt both interest and curiosity about him—a feeling which grew upon me as I conversed with him. He was of medium height and of good figure, with a pleasant face, light beard and crisp moustache. His dreamy, melancholy eyes looked out from under bent brows, and his massive forehead was covered with

thick curling locks of brown hair prematurely streaked with gray. Handsome or not, his appearance was striking, and was emphasized still more by the slight singularity of his dress, which included a sort of dolman and top-boots, and was a half compromise with the national costume of Hungary. He resembled strikingly the portraits of Beethoven, whom a lady once called *un beau laidron.*

I returned his call the next day with a talented and genial countryman of his own—Graf Tassilo Almasi—prepared to find evidences of ability in the work of our new acquaintance, but not anticipating its extent. The picture on which he was engaged was a subject of Hungarian genre, and represented the toilette of a bride. The scene was a peasant's hut, where a fair girl was in process of adornment at the hands of an old woman. Admiring children stood looking on, while a teasing elder brother made mocking gestures of astonishment and approval to disconcert the blushing bride. The rafters were hung with garlands, the wedding-feast was preparing, and through the half-opened door the bridegroom or "the best man" was looking impatiently at the group. The whole composition was full of humor, naïve and natural as one of Hogarth's, and was painted with a delicacy and vigor which almost equalled Knaus.

The young painter's name was MICHAEL MUNKACSY;* and in a very brief time—notwithstanding a reserved manner which amounted almost to hauteur—he became a universal favorite in the ateliers and in society. Besides his power as an artist, he developed on acquaintance all kinds of natural talents. He rode horseback with remarkable grace and daring, and was an amateur actor and mimic unsurpassed by the trained *coryphées* of the Malkasten stage, besides being a clever conjuror and an astonishing musician. He whistled as Patti sings. With his features in perfect repose, like a marble faun's, and the handsome lines of his mouth scarcely contracted in the least, he gave utterance to the most strangely-beautiful notes—ripples of silvery sound that a nightingale might envy or a mocking-bird break its heart in trying to imitate. Mournful Hungarian melodies came from his lips plaintive as a sigh, rising and falling in improvised variations, and then bursting into a clear liquid warble like that of a bird. There was a Paganini-like perfection in this music that I have rarely heard equalled by any virtuoso on any instrument.

I do not remember when I first learned his history, which was as romantic as that of Wilhelm Meister. He related it in fragments, as some passing scene or incident suggested a reminiscence, and generally on some ride we took together, when, after a mad gallop over the Hardt or under the firs of Graffenberg, we slackened rein and followed, leisurely chatting, the windings of the Düssel.

The youngest of five children, he could scarcely recollect his parents. He was born in the town of Muncacs on the 10th of October, 1846. When the revolution which convulsed Europe two years later occurred, his father, who was an official in the imperial royal treasury, joined the insurgents. The world has not forgotten the events which followed—the brief episode of the republic, the travail which accompanied its birth and the throes of its final dissolution. Among the many bloody scenes of the cruel year 1849, when Russian intervention crushed the last hope of the Magyar patriots, was the massacre of both Munkacsy's parents, who fell by Cossack bayonets. The five orphaned children whom the barbarians spared were scattered here and there among relatives.

An uncle, Stephan Roeck, took the three-year-old Michael to his home. This good man, who had also been ruined by the sad events of the insurrection, was as kind to his nephew as circumstances permitted, but could give him no education beyond that of the peasant neighbors amidst whom he grew up, sharing their labors and their privations. In the year 1854 the uncle found himself obliged to make the boy earn his own livelihood, and appren-

* Pronounced, as nearly as I can write it phonetically, *Munkatch'ee.*

ticed him to a carpenter in Békes-Esaba. For six long years he endured the slavery of this occupation. He sawed and nailed and planed from early morning until late at night. He grew in stature, but his mind remained a white page—full of susceptibility, full of vague longings, but without education or knowledge. In his apprenticeship he learned by bitter experience lessons which have given motives for his later pictures, most of them sad and sombre, even in their humor, but full of sympathy with the poor and the suffering.

In Hungary, as in most other parts of Europe, the village carpenter is Jack of all trades—builder, cabinetmaker, undertaker, upholsterer and house-painter at the same time. Michael's earliest experience with colors was painting the outside of a cottage, and his first rude attempts at drawing were made on the smooth surface of a plank he had just planed. Many a time, indeed, was he roughly roused from some youthful artist-dream by a cut from a whip in the hand of his boorish master for tracing some face or figure with a bit of charcoal on the tempting whiteness of such a board. Even to-day he rarely makes use of canvas, but paints almost exclusively on panel—a preference which may be traced to this early habit. What he suffered at times may be illustrated by an anecdote. Once, walking together through a Düsseldorf street, we came across a youth who was painting a cellar-door. "Du!" said he: "I have often done that same—in winter, too, when the weather was bitter cold, and every passer-by shivered even when wrapped in furs, and I in a thin jacket, my hands bleeding through the cracked skin. Dost know what my highest ambition was?" and with a smile which had more melancholy than amusement in it, he continued: "To be a tailor!" Think of a wretchedness whose ideal of existence was shelter and warmth—of misery compared with which the shop-board and the company of a hot smoothing-iron were happiness!

Munkacsy's life has been indeed a romance. How even genius could ever conquer the unfavorable surroundings of his obscure early life is little less than a miracle. The Muse of Art watched over him, and in his case, as in that of so many others, the slightest of accidents determined his future career. Among the Hungarian peasants an indispensable piece of furniture of every rustic bride's *trousseau* is a gaudy chest of drawers, ornamented with bright-colored flowers, wreaths and garlands. The manufacture of these objects was an important item in the village carpenter's business, and the little Michael, being allowed to try his hand at decorating them, soon showed such remarkable skill and taste that at last this flower-painting became his especial domain. It was the pebble which decided the course of the river. Once in the right path, his genius aspired further, and by close application he improved more and more in drawing, until finally, his apprenticeship concluded, he left his worthy but hard master and went to Gyula, where he became a pupil of a painter named Szamosy, who gave him his first instruction in art. His ambition was not yet to become an artist: it was then more modest. He aspired only to become a house-painter and decorator (*Zimmermaler*).

But his talent developed with wonderful rapidity, and he drew study-heads and portraits which his teacher approved and the villagers applauded. Gradually the presentiment of higher aspirations awakened in his soul. The way was not without impediments, however. His good uncle was made uneasy by this new turn, and shook his head sadly, foreboding no good from it; but when his nephew persuaded him to sit for his own portrait, and the result was a true resemblance, the old man recognized the finger of Heaven in this wonderful talent, and Michael was allowed to follow where it pointed.

By patient industry and eager force of will he rapidly made up for the deficiencies of his earlier years, and in 1863 he wandered to Pesth, travelling like a *Handwerksbursche*, and making strange acquaintances among gypsies, vagabonds and roving apprentices on the route—

acquaintances that served his imagination later as motives and models. For a while he earned a scanty subsistence in the capital with portraits and small genre pictures, for which, as in most of those painted since, he sought his subjects in the original episodes of Hungarian popular life. The first of these, an hussar relating his adventures, was admitted to the Art Union Exhibition, and sold. He even managed to save a little sum, with which, full of hope and enthusiasm, he began his wanderings afresh, going the following year to Vienna, where he thought to study with Rahl, an excellent painter, but one whose direction lay quite opposite to that of the young genius. Rahl was ill, however, and died shortly after, and Munkacsy's attempt to educate himself in the academy fell through for want of means. With a fatuity equalling that of the Düsseldorf Academy professors—who prophesied that Andreas Achenbach, and, in later years, Ludwig Knaus, would never become artists—the authorities of the Vienna school failed to recognize his talent, and when it became impossible for him to pay with punctuality the small academy fee, he was shown the door without ceremony. How he subsisted during this time, without friends and scarcely able to speak the German language, I forbore to question. Perhaps his good uncle sent him a few gulden now and then, or he picked up a few kreutzers from some picture-dealer. Courage and industry never failed him.

So it happened that nine months later he came to Munich, where a more liberal practice reigned with reference to instruction. He tried to become a pupil of Piloty, but that professor's class—which has become famous through pupils like Makart, Faber du Faur, Defregger, Leibl and David Neal—was full, and he did not succeed in obtaining admission. However, he visited the painting-class of the academy, and found a friendly adviser in the battle-painter Franz Adam, who assisted him in his outside work. Of his strange appearance, his naïve confidence, his broken German and his low melancholy voice many stories are told to-day in the Munich ateliers. His ability soon made itself recognized, and he painted numerous pictures for the lower-class dealers, working even by lamplight in his narrow lodging, but striving more for excellence than for bread.

Up to this time his life had been a struggle for existence, but the success which in human affairs comes sooner or later to the patient and persevering was preparing for him. The Art Union of Pesth bought two of his pictures, *Roasting-Ears* and *Easter Festivities*, and under the auspices of Baron Etvös, at that time Hungarian Minister of Instruction, a competitive exhibition took place, in which Munkacsy's contribution obtained the first prize, amounting to eight hundred gulden—a fortune to him in those days. This plucky sketch, which still occupies a place in the artist's studio, represented *An Inundation*—such a catastrophe as has quite recently desolated a portion of his fatherland—and, while somewhat academical, was still bold and dramatic in its half-genre, half-historical treatment. A second and third time Fortune befriended him, and he was awarded the prize for compositions which showed a rapid and remarkable advance. The *Wedding Invitation* and *Dressing the Bride* were the subjects of his sketches. The *Departure to War* and the *Return to Peace*, other Hungarian subjects produced at the same time, gave even higher promise.

With the capital acquired in these competitions Munkacsy came to Düsseldorf and set up his easel in the Jäger-hof-Strasse in the manner I have described. He had been drawn thither by the influence of Knaus, but he soon found himself more a master than a pupil. With the hard, dry, conventional Düsseldorf school he had little or no sympathy. He startled the whole raft of mediocrities there, as the advent of a larger fish might startle the minnows in a pool. His peculiarities challenged their criticism, but it was idle to underrate or oppose him: they ended by admiring and imitating. Young artists who came to him frankly he advised and instructed: older ones visited his

atelier in his absence and studied his technique by stealth.

Meanwhile, his amiability and bonhomie made him generally popular in and outside of artistic circles. He took a prominent part in all the gayety that was going on in the city, and was an especial favorite among ladies. Although he neither smoked nor drank, he would often sit with a *lustig* crowd of revellers at the Malkasten until morning, and be the jolliest one of them all. I remember, for instance, meeting, in the early dawn of a February morning, a carnival throng in fantastic costumes on horseback. The night had been spent at a *Fasching* ball, and, accoutred as they were, they had sought refreshment in a wild ride across country, from which they were returning. The staid burgher frauen and maidens going home from early mass, with the ash-mark on their foreheads, stared after the strange cavalcade, the most extravagant rider of which was the "sad, mad, glad," yet perfectly sober, brother Munkacsy.

About this time a propitious accident made me acquainted with an American gentleman who was passing through Düsseldorf. He was a millionaire, who sadly confessed to having wasted too many years in making money merely, and he was than earnestly endeavoring to educate himself to higher needs and attainments. His was not an isolated case in my experience, nor was it so strange as it may appear. At all events, he was devoting himself especially, with the enthusiasm of a collector tempered by the shrewdness of a man of business, to the acquisition of a gallery of works of art. I had the good fortune for all concerned to impress him with my own opinion of Munkacsy's genius, and in consequence he was easily persuaded to share my hopes of the young Hungarian's future. It ended in his giving him a commission for a large picture. The price agreed upon was an enormous advance on those the artist had hitherto received, though now it would be absurdly small for the painting, but it showed as much liberality as foresight at that time. I had stipulated for an advance of half the payment, which enabled the young painter to meet the expense of models and devote himself undisturbed to the elaboration of his work. It was begun without delay, and I can remember Munkacsy's satisfaction when the immense panel — fifty-two by seventy-two inches, which he himself assisted the joiner to prepare, and which, true to his earliest custom, he preferred to canvas — was brought into his studio. The subject was already chosen, and had been long dreamed and talked over. It was one of those happy suggestions that occur but rarely to the most fortunate imagination, but one that could be treated successfully only by a profoundly subjective genius. Its title, the *Siralomház*, is the Hungarian name for the house or cell in which the last hours of a condemned felon are passed before the expiation of his crime.*

It belonged to the highest order of genre — as much higher than the ordinary historical painting as *Hamlet* is above *Titus Andronicus*—and no wonder that even the cartoon awakened an intense interest, and almost consternation, among the petty dabblers of mild anecdote and still-life who called themselves genre-painters in Düsseldorf. Since Hübner's *Jagdrecht* and Tiedemand's *Norse Duel* no subject of such tragic interest had been attempted there, and in comparison with this those *chefs-d'œuvre* were weak and conventional.

The composition illustrates the Hungarian custom which permits to a condemned criminal an opportunity of taking a last leave of his friends and acquaintances on the eve of his execution. This supreme moment, of higher psychological interest than the execution itself, is the one the young artist chose to de-

* In the photographs and prints by which it is generally known the picture is called by the title it bore in the catalogue of the Salon—*Le Dernier Jour d'un Condamné.*

In this connection, I cannot refrain from expressing my regret that the artist's earnest and justifiable request that the painting—at the time in Philadelphia—should be exhibited at the Centennial Exposition was not complied with. The refusal to allow it was the more ungracious, as the commercial value of the picture had increased to quite *ten times* the price paid for it in 1869. The original purchaser, whose death was a loss to Art, would have been the first to wish it placed where it would have been seen so effectively.

pict. The scene is a cavernous cell, illumed by a pallid light from above struggling through a grated hole in the middle of the composition—a gloomy apartment, distinct in its *clair-obscur* as a Rembrandt, in which the lighted candles on the table before the prisoner burn dimly. Between these candles stands a crucifix: the table is covered with a white cloth. Behind it sits the condemned man, his fist clenched and his pale face, on which a haggard despair, almost resignation, broods, turned to the spectator. His burning eyes, looking out from under a mass of dishevelled black hair, stare fixed and hopeless into the unknown and terrible future. His foot is manacled with a chain fastened by a staple in the wall. Behind him, leaning partly on his musket and partly against a pillar, stands a sentry, an Austrian soldier, looking on the scene with stolid official indifference. The condemned is obviously no hardened sinner, no every-day murderer, but a poor wretch whom in an evil hour his guardian angel had abandoned: most likely one of those outlawed brigands whom political troubles or destiny have forced into a course of life which brings them into conflict with the law. Near him stands his weeping wife, her head turned against the wall, incapable of giving the consolation she has wished to bring—heart-broken and desolate herself. Between them, awestruck yet unconscious, stands their child, its little hand in its mouth, gazing into vacancy. Anything more touching and tragic than this group of the three principal actors of the drama it would be impossible to conceive. The left of the picture is filled with unsurpassed character-figures, on whose countenances the most differing shades of emotion are expressed. There are the friends, whose faces exhibit sorrow only, the calm observer, the secret sympathizer and perhaps accomplice, and the one who had predicted it would come to this. There are morbid curiosity and shrinking horror. A young mother with a child in her arms looks pityingly on, and has brought with her other children, maybe to teach them the lesson of the frightful example. Nearer is a boy shrinking back from the prisoner, and nearer still a youth on whose shoulder an old woman leans: blood-relatives these or intimate friends. A tall and brawny-armed smith, looking his sympathy, stands in the foreground, and beside him, timidly curious, a young and beautiful girl with a basket. An old man with a fine head gazes reflectively mournful in the background; and behind, at an open door, a group of gossips croon their observations to one another. On the floor of the cell is a basin half full of copper coins—contributions made for the benefit of the dying man's family or his soul—and a book, probably a missal, which in a moment of passion or impatience he has hurled from him.

The picture, so full of dramatic force and poetry, was not less admirable in execution, and was painted with a breadth of effect and a bold and facile virtuosoship which were phenomenal in Düsseldorf. It was exhibited, when finished, in association with two other paintings by distinguished artists—Andreas Achenbach and Benjamin Vautier—for the benefit of a charity, and the exhibition-room was crowded by eager admirers as long as it was kept open, the other two paintings, excellent as they were, attracting slight attention in comparison with that bestowed upon this first important work of the youthful painter.

Nevertheless, it was with doubtful and anxious forebodings, which it required all my enthusiasm to allay, that, in compliance with the wish of the owner, Munkacsy sent his picture to the Paris Salon of 1870. He was as sad when the case in which it was packed was taken away as if it were a coffin, and remained wan and dejected for weeks after. The first news of its fate was brought by the foremost art-dealer in the world, Goupil, who posted from Paris to the Rhine the day after the École des Beaux Arts opened its doors for the private view. He came to hail the rising star, and to offer, in vain, thrice the price for which the picture had been sold. He ransacked the painter's atelier and bid fabulous prices

for sketches and studies. He departed disappointed, but not until he had contracted for a number of future works. Others followed on like errands. Munkacsy awoke, like Byron, to find himself famous.

When the Exhibition opened I accompanied him to Paris to share his triumph with him. In effect, he was the lion of the year. His picture shared with Regnault's *Salome* the admiration of the public and the applause of the critics. "Cham" caricatured it, and predicted what happened—that it would receive the gold medal. The greatest French painters welcomed Munkacsy in their midst, especially Meissonier and Fortuny, of whom and their ateliers, which we visited together, I have the most pleasant recollections.

He was not spoiled in the least by the compliments and attentions he received on all hands, but remained as modest and simple as before, hunting up old comrades of Munich and Düsseldorf in studios around the Boulevard de Clichy, interesting himself in their work, and using his influence for their benefit with the connoisseurs and dealers whose acquaintance he made. One characteristic incident occurred. Munkacsy was always neatly and well dressed, even when the world went hardest with him. He never looked other than a gentleman himself, nor could he excuse slovenly and foul apparel in others. One day he invited Leibl—a great brawny Bavarian, with a shell like an oyster's and a heart like a pearl, but careless as a Communard of dress and linen—to dine with him; but when his guest descended into the street in a wide-awake hat and a soiled blouse, Munkacsy refused to walk beside him unless he changed his costume, which Leibl, with a stare and a colossal burst of laughter, refused to do. A compromise was brought about, by which the two friends went by different routes to the restaurant.

His first thought, when ready to leave Paris, was to revisit his fatherland and share with his sisters, his good old uncle and other friends in Békes-Esaba the pleasure of his triumph, and, I doubt not, to divide also with them the pecuniary results. Not only at home, but in Pesth and other towns, he was warmly welcomed and fêted; and he returned to Düsseldorf with a ribbon in his buttonhole among other trophies.

A new work had been already commenced, a pendant in size to the first, and, like it, an illustration of an episode of Hungarian life, ordered by one of the disappointed suitors for that picture—James Staats Forbes, Esq., of London. It was called *Krieges-Zeit* (*War-Time*), and was a reminiscence of that wild revolutionary period which had so sorrowfully impressed itself upon his youthful mind. It disclosed a large room in an Hungarian country-house, where, around a long table, the women of the village, of high and low degree, children, the aged and the invalid, were occupied in picking lint for the wounded. While thus employed a young and maimed Honved, his face pale with recent suffering and his uniform bearing the stains of the bivouac and the battle-field, was recounting the story of the latest engagement with flashing eye and outstretched arm. His hearers seemed affected each after his or her temperament. The old veteran's face in the background lighted up with patriotic memories. The wan, deformed invalid, plucking with nervous fingers at his bit of rag, looked with impatient admiration and envy at the narrator who had been fortunate enough to be wounded for his country. One girl is weeping. (I have changed the tense, for I am looking at the original cartoon as I write.) One mother is gazing anxiously expectant into a void which is peopled, maybe, by images of husband and son in the midst of the fight. An old grandmother is picking mechanically, lost in early recollections. A child empties the snowy contents of her apron into a basket; and a lady in black—an officer's wife or widow—sits with her hands folded in her lap, her sad fair face turned toward the eloquent soldier, pensively listening. As a subject this work might be less dramatic than its predecessor, but it was not less full of subtly-conceived psychological studies

and purport. As a work of art merely it exhibited, if not improvement, at least a power equally sustained and genuine.

Before Munkacsy returned from his tour in Hungary war-times had again come round, and the hands, rough and tender, of German women become familiar with the occupation of their sisters in his picture. That France we had so recently visited under such happy circumstances was being rent and ravaged. Our artist-friends of the German colony, with whom we had passed such pleasant days in Paris, were exiles and fugitives from their ateliers. Most of our other acquaintances were in the army, among them young painters who as *freiwillige* had exchanged the mahlstock for the lance and the palette-knife for the sabre. The people of the Rhineland, who had been at first shocked, sad and alarmed, were now almost delirious with joy at the unexpected success of their arms, and we foreigners in their midst, who felt only a moderate sympathy with this exultation, becoming daily more isolated, were drawn the closer together in consequence.

Munkacsy lived up to his income. Young and ardent, the confidence he felt in himself and his future already justified by success, no thought of economy or of accumulation entered his mind. He discounted Fortune and exacted from her the immediate fulfilment of her promises. On his return to Düsseldorf he quitted his old atelier in the Ritter Burg — a barrack in a squalid quarter, inhabited by Bohemians and poor mechanics now, but which, as its name indicates, had been in old times a stately mansion in a noble faubourg, and had sheltered bold knights and lovely dames. He fitted up, in a building formerly occupied by Leutze in the Hofgarten, a studio which was the envy and admiration of his colleagues. He purchased bric-à-brac, tapestries, exquisite Sèvres and old masters. He moved into handsomer lodgings, and gave frequent entertainments to his friends, for whom, a water-drinker himself, he caused to be sent him from home cases of Hungarian wines, the vintages of Ofen and Tokai.

We met daily at dinner at the table-d'hôte of the Breidenbacher Hof, presided over by the genial Capellen, prince of landlords. During the early months of the war our table-society was a small but very select one, consisting almost entirely of *abonnées*, most of whom were government officials, assessors, counsellors and the like, with an occasional military guest. Travellers there were none, strangers were rare. The railways were employed almost exclusively by the war department for the movement of troops and supplies to the army in the front, and for the return of the wounded and the transportation of continually increasing hosts of prisoners-of-war. One day, going as usual to dinner, I observed a crowd of riffraff and children collected about the hotel-door, many of them hooting and all of them more or less noisy. On entering I discovered the explanation: the antechamber was full of French uniforms, worn by bronzed, sad-looking, yet dignified gentlemen, many of them with a bandage under the kepi or an arm in a sling. They were captives of Gravelotte and Mars le Tour, the first convoy of officers which had arrived. They were all travel- and battle-stained, and, being destitute of baggage, were compelled to wear the uniforms which had inspired the curiosity and excited the mockery of the vulgar populace. All were of high military or social rank, which accounted for their being permitted to lodge at an hotel instead of a caserne. They dined at the table-d'hôte, a little apart from the usual guests, who scowled more or less at them, and their tuniques and gold lace gave an unwonted color and animation to the scene.

A few days later I found Munkacsy, who did not speak or understand French at that time, carrying on a difficult interview with one of the newly-arrived guests. The stranger, a general, did not know a word of German, but, having by some means discovered who my friend was, was complimenting him with great volubility on his picture at the recent Salon. The incident led to our making many pleasant acquaintances among the captive officers, and was destined remotely to have an im-

portant influence upon Munkacsy's career.

In a short time we were on terms of friendliest intercourse with the unfortunate strangers, stimulated by sympathy and a mutual interchange of hospitalities. On Christmas Day we invited several of them to dine with us at our hotel, where, at the table-d'hôte, one of our guests recognized an old friend, to whom he presented us, and by whom in turn we were presented to his wife, who accompanied him. He was the Baron de Marches, a Luxembourg gentleman of distinguished appearance, who, having served in the Austrian army as colonel of hussars, was able to converse with Munkacsy in his native tongue. His wife, very much younger than himself, was exceedingly handsome, spoke German fluently, and by her frank *esprit* and amiability lent a charm to the dinner which was the more delightful from not having been anticipated. A warm friendship between Baron de Marches and Munkacsy was commenced on this day, and continued unbroken until the former's death, which took place in 1872. In 1874 his charming widow, who had inherited property in Luxembourg and Paris, became Madame Munkacsy.

Another entertainment of less importance in its results was given at his studio by Munkacsy a few weeks later, and may be alluded to without indiscretion as an illustration of Bohemian artist-life and of the original hospitality of the entertainer. It scandalized the Düsseldorfers,. more on political than moral grounds, and perhaps, above all, because beyond the fact of its occurrence they knew nothing whatever about it.

The card of invitation was surmounted by armorial bearings — a palette gutty, gules, az., et cet.; crest, a sheaf of pencils proper; with two models as supporters. It read:


Mr. Munkacsy a l'honneur d'informer
Mr. John R. Tait
qu'il restera chez-lui le Mercredi soir à huit heures.
à son atelier. On dansera sans musique.
L'habit noir n'est pas de rigueur mais on pourra fumer
Dusseldorf le 10 Janv. 1871.
R.s.v.p.

A dozen distinguished warriors and two civilians — Ladislas de Paal and myself — received and accepted the bizarre invitation.

The large atelier was decorated for the fête, and could not have been arranged more picturesquely. The walls, hung with old tapestries, were relieved by gleaming armor and rare china, and on easels in the background were the paintings on which our host was engaged at the time. A table with thirty covers, bright with crystal and gay with flowers, filled the centre of the room. The guests arrived almost together, and when a few moments later they took their places at the board an inquiring glance was cast at the vacant seats which separated each one from his neighbor, and toward the host, who for answer only smiled and bade the servants fill the glasses. This done, he gave a sign to one, who threw open the door. A slight murmur of giggling voices was heard, and in rushed a bevy of laughing girls, clad in costumes more or less fantastical of peasants and of ladies of differing eras and various countries. The gentlemen welcomed them with shouts of surprised mirth, and the secret of the empty chairs was explained. The dinner was then served. The new arrivals were not ladies nor fairies, albeit they served the *genius loci*. They were only models, the prettiest the city afforded, the originals of hundreds of pictures from Madonnas to Margarets, and in their attire, mediæval or rococo—genuine robes and petticoats which had been worn by real countesses and real peasants in their day—they completed the brilliancy of the *coup d'œil*. The eyes of old generals and colonels sparkled as their little enemies took their places beside them, and roars of laughter followed the futile attempts at conversation which ensued. There was an interchange of comment and compliment, unintelligible indeed to the recipients in most cases, but not the less amusing. The fresh young faces supplemented the flowers, brightened the *mise en scène*, made the gayety general and prevented the guests from breaking up into separate groups. The witches disappeared as suddenly as they had come soon after the first cigarette was rolled or Havana lighted, and a dozen French gentlemen had learned each a word or two of German and had forgotten captivity for an hour.

When the war was over Munkacsy accompanied his friend Baron de Marches, who had property-interests to look after, to Paris, where they arrived a day or two after the death-struggle of the Commune, while the ruins of the Hôtel de Ville and the Tuileries yet smouldered, and the houses along the boulevards, pitted as by smallpox with musket-balls or gaping in huge rents where shells had exploded, bore witness to the recent horrors. While there he met and was warmly welcomed by many of the officers who had returned from their captivity, and the intention he had formed the year before of making Paris his future home was revived.

Unfinished work recalled him to Düsseldorf, however, greatly to his disgust, as he wrote me. A professorship at the Academy of Weimar was offered to and declined by him, and, notwithstanding other inducements were held out to retain him, he left Germany a few months later to settle permanently in the French capital, where he opened a charming atelier in the Rue de Lisbonne.

Here, in 1873, I visited him, and could not help being impressed by the vivid contrasts of his career. The waif of an Hungarian village and apprentice of a humble carpenter had become in ten years only, by force of genius, tireless industry and iron will, the acknowledged equal of the greatest modern masters, the intimate of the most *recherché* salons, the companion of princes. Still young, "the handsomest artist in Paris," *décoré* and on the high road to fame and fortune, he was unchanged in heart and mind—as modest and as simple in mien and manner as when struggling and poor he painted in the old Ritter Burg. "It often happens that laurels early gathered poison the effort of him who wins them," said a countryman of his. With Munkacsy this has not been the case.

For the past five years his career has been a triumphal march. New medals and renewed applause have rewarded his successive contributions to the Salon.

When the artists of Paris, just before his death, gave a *médaille d'honneur* to the veteran Corot, Munkacsy was the one selected to make the presentation. The two embraced—the old man the type of the last generation, the youth a leader of the present. His paintings, sought for by connoisseurs all over the world, are becoming well known in America, where indeed his *chefs-d'œuvre* are owned—the *Siralomház* and the *Village Wrestler*, the latter in Mr. Gibson's gallery in Philadelphia, and *Milton dictating Paradise Lost*, purchased out of the last Exposition for the Lennox Library in New York.

Besides other important works—*The Mont de Piété*, *The Night-Wanderers*, *The Studio*, etc., etc., each of which would merit description—Munkacsy has painted many portraits and landscapes of exquisite beauty—dreary "pusta" motives, gypsy encampments, horse-mills, hay-fields—for the most part simple subjects, low in tone and full of poetry and the breath of Nature.

When the writer last saw him, in 1876, he was about removing into an hôtel he had just built, adjoining the dwellings of Meissonier and Goupil, in the aristocratic artist quarter of the Parc Monçeau, where his atelier promised to be one of the "sights" of Paris. He was then still in the Rue de Lisbonne, where Madame Munkacsy (whose portrait with his own is in the picture of *The Studio*) presided with perfect grace and hospitality over a salon filled with poets, artists and ambassadors, and related charming stories of adventures in Hungary and Italy on their recent *voyage de noces*.

Munkacsy is fond of literature, and has himself contributed many articles of merit to Hungarian periodicals. His favorite British poet is Burns; American, Edgar Poe; and Hungarian, Petövi, the last of whom, comparatively unknown to English readers, deserves better translators than he has found. In his present position he is as liberal as a grand seigneur: in less prosperous days he was generous to a fault, not only to countrymen of his own in distress—of whom he had more than one pensioner—not only to friends, but wherever there was poverty to mitigate or distress to console. Many is the hour I have seen him give to some poor devil of a painter, correcting the drawing of an indifferent work, painting as carefully on some unfortunate canvas as on one of his own, putting effect and life and color into a dead design, in order to aid the unsuccessful neighbor: this, too, when he himself could ill afford the time it cost.

In the foregoing pages the writer has attempted to sketch a career which is, it may be hoped, as yet in its beginning, and from which in the future still greater results may be expected—a career, so far, not merely of curious vicissitudes, but of heroism, and full of lessons of example and encouragement. Munkacsy found his way without groping: he was original from the very first, and his success illustrates the poet's maxim:

> Greift nur hinein ins volle Menschenleben!
> * * * * *
> Wo ihr es packt, da ist's interessant!

In an age when art too frequently ministers to a depraved sensualism or an epicene sentimentality, and delights in barbaric decoration, in brutal realism, and in the delineation of morbid sensations or trivial anecdotes, it is refreshing and worthy of note to witness the recognition this young Hungarian has obtained by works which are drawn from the pure fresh inspiration of Nature, and which, while far from being didactic or *tendenziös*, seldom fail to leave in the beholder the impression of a high moral aim and noble impulse.

JOHN R. TAIT.